

STAP side event at UNCCD COP 16

Event title: Why drought resilience matters for the global environment

Organizer: The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Date: December 5, 2024

Time: 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Venue: MET– 04

Overview:

Drought, intensified by climate change, has become a significant global challenge with profound environmental and socioeconomic consequences. It disrupts ecosystems, deteriorates soil health, accelerates biodiversity loss, and increases greenhouse gas emissions. It also endangers agricultural systems, worsens water scarcity, and threatens food security.

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is organizing a side event on drought resilience at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). This side event focuses on integrated, proactive strategies to mitigate drought impacts by bridging efforts across land, water, climate, and biodiversity sectors. Join experts, policymakers, and stakeholders to explore practical solutions that strengthen resilience, safeguard global environmental benefits, and support vulnerable communities on the frontlines of this critical challenge.

The session will begin with a keynote presentation by Roger Pulwarty (Science-Policy Interface) and Daniel Tsegai (UNCCD secretariat), exploring the science behind the causes, trends, and impact of drought on the global environment. Ermias Betemariam, STAP member for land degradation, will then moderate a panel discussion on drought resilience, focusing on how proactive approaches to drought can help address global environmental challenges, such as land degradation, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, and vulnerability to climate change – issues that are central to the UNCCD and the GEF.

The structure of the side event is as follows:

Moderator: Ermias Betemariam, STAP

1:00 PM - 1:05 PM

Opening Remarks

Mohamed Bakarr, Manager, Integration and Knowledge Management Division, GEF secretariat

1:05 PM - 1:20 PM

Keynote Presentation

Roger Pulwarty, Science-Policy Interface, and Daniel Tsegai, UNCCD:

Presentation on the science of drought and its impact on the global environment. It will also cover proactive drought management approaches and discuss challenges brought on by climate change trends.

1:20 PM - 2:00 PM

Panel Discussion

Featuring the following experts:

- **1:20 PM - 1:30 PM**

Pablo Viegas Aurelio, UNCCD focal point for Argentina:

Presentation on Argentina's national drought plan. Argentina has developed a National Drought Plan that integrates early warning systems, resource management, policy coherence, and climate adaptation strategies. How do we view the effectiveness of this approach, and what key lessons can be drawn from it for other nations facing similar challenges? Issues, or factors, enabled policy coherence to happen.

- **1:30 PM - 1:40 PM**

Louise Baker, Managing Director, UNCCD Global Mechanism (GM):

An overview of the GM's support for drought resilience, priorities, and essential tools and partnerships.

- **1:40 - 1:50 PM**

Michael Brüntrup, German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS): drought across the Rio Conventions.

- **1:50 PM - 2:00 PM**

Ulrich Apel, Land Degradation Focal Area Coordinator, GEF Secretariat:

Discussion on the importance of drought resilience to the GEF.

2:10 PM - 2:30 PM

Q&A Session

Open floor for questions from the audience to the keynote speaker and panelists.

2:30 PM

Closing Remarks

Ermias Betemariam, STAP

Bio notes

Ermias Betemariam



Dr. Ermias is a land health scientist at the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), focusing on understanding land health constraints and targeting interventions to sustain ecosystem services. He has served on the UNCCD Science-Policy Interface, fostering dialogue between scientists and policymakers on desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD). He contributes to the IPBES scoping report on biodiversity loss and transformative change. Dr. Ermias also serves as Deputy Coordinator for IUFRO 4.02.01 Resource Data in the Tropics and as a member of the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) on land degradation.

Mohamed Bakarr



Dr Mohamed Bakarr is a Manager in the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Secretariat in Washington DC, with responsibility for Integration, Knowledge, and Learning. He oversees all programming on advancing holistic and integrated solutions to global environmental challenges. His expertise covers a broad range of issues related to natural resource management in the tropics, but focuses mainly on linkages among biodiversity conservation, agricultural land use, and human well-being. Prior to joining the GEF, Mohamed was at Conservation International where he served in several capacities including as Senior Vice President and Executive Director of the Center for Applied Biodiversity Science. He also served as Director of Strategic Initiatives and Assistant Director General at the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) based in Nairobi, Kenya. Mohamed is from Sierra Leone and holds a PhD degrees in Tropical Ecology from the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, USA.

Guadalupe Durón



Guadalupe Durón works in the Secretariat of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as a Programme Management Officer. She works on sustainable land management activities to support the GEF's work in this area. While doing so, Guadalupe supports STAP in developing and delivering strategic advice for the GEF's land degradation focal area. She also supports STAP's work on cross-cutting topics, such as systems thinking, resilience, policy coherence, and blended finance. Guadalupe holds a Master of Science Degree in Development Studies with a focus on Agriculture, Environment, and Development from the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom.

Daniel Tsegai



He is a Programme Officer at the UNCCD Secretariat with a background in Environmental Science, Water security, migration, drought policy, as well as Disaster Risk Management. He has experienced in managing projects, conducting research and policy dialogues related to natural disasters with a focus on drought and water policy as well as agricultural governance. He holds a PhD degree in Agricultural/Development Economics from the Center for Development Research at the University of Bonn.

Roger Pulwarty



Dr. Roger S. Pulwarty is the Senior Scientist in the NOAA Physical Sciences Laboratory at the NOAA Office of Oceans and Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado. He was previously the Senior Science Advisor for Climate, and the Director of the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) in the NOAA Climate Program Office. Roger is a lead author on the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Global Assessment Reports, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Reports on Water Resources and on Extremes, and convening lead author on the IPCC Working Group II Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, and the US National Climate Assessment.

Pablo Viegas Aurelio



Pablo Viegas Aurelio is technical advisor for the Undersecretary of Environment of Argentina and UNCCD Technical Focal Point. He graduated in law and postgraduate in business and agribusiness law of the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). Since 2001 he works on the subject of soil degradation and the fight against desertification and national representative in the UNCCD. Was national coordinator from many projects supported by UN and national and international agencies related with sustainable land management. He also work on the National Action Plan for

Combating Desertification and Drought. He is a teacher and collaborator in different undergraduate and graduate courses related to the subject.

Michael Brüntrup



Michael Brüntrup is agricultural engineer and holds a PhD in agricultural economy. He is a senior researcher at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) in Bonn. His interests cover topics related to agriculture, natural resource management, rural development, trade policy and food security with a geographical focus on Sub Saharan Africa. From 2020 to 2022, he was a member of the Committee on Science and Technology of the UNCCD. He is now co-chair of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on drought.

Ulrich Apel



Ulrich Apel, a German national, is a Senior Environmental Specialist in the Global Environment Facility (GEF) with an expertise on sustainable land and forest management. He coordinates GEF's land degradation focal area and ecosystem restoration program consisting of a global portfolio of GEF projects and programs. Prior to joining the GEF, he worked a chief technical advisor in natural resource management projects in China and Vietnam and conducted field research in community forestry, land use planning, land tenure, and legal framework analysis. Ulrich holds a master's in forestry sciences and a PhD in tropical and subtropical forest management from the University of Goettingen, Germany.

Mohamed Sidina



Dr. Mohamed Sidina is a DRYLANDS project coordinator, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MEDD) in Mauritania.

Since 2011 Dr. Sidina has worked on the themes like Agroecology, Project Management, Sustainable Development, drought, land degradation and the fight against desertification, Sustainable exploitation and management of natural resources.

Johnson Ndokosho



Director at Ministry of Environment, Forestry & Tourism

Ndokosho has been in the natural resource management sector for nearly 24 years. He has worked on several themes like Water and Sanitation, Climate Change.

Ndokosho holds two Masters Degrees, one in Leadership and Change Management from Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) and the second, in Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) from the University of Zimbabwe. He also has a B-Tech degree in Nature Conservation

from the Port Elizabeth Technikon (now Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University) — South Africa.